

Department of Human Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, March 19, 2008

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
*Child Abuse/ Neglect/Protection	2-10
Foster Care	11
Day Care	12-13
Juvenile Justice	14-15
Domestic Violence	16-20
Food Assistance	21
Homelessness	22-23
Charities	24-26
DHS Director	27

*Important story at this spot

Parents charged in death of boy they tried to cremate

Detroit couple also accused of welfare fraud

BY BEN SCHMITT • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • MARCH 19, 2008

The parents of a 2-year-old boy whose remains were found in a basement ceiling in Detroit last year were charged today with first-degree murder and welfare fraud.

Nickella Reid, 24, and Joseph Miller, 28, both of Detroit, are charged with first-degree murder in the death of Deuntay Miller, who died nearly two years ago in his parents' care. Reid and Miller told police that they tried to cremate Deuntay in a barbecue grill to avoid funeral costs.

The remains were discovered in November as Detroit police investigated burn injuries to a 1-year-old boy, who police said is Deuntay's brother.

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy also announced welfare fraud charges which stem from Reid allegedly collecting welfare and food stamps in the name of Deuntay after the boy died.

Worthy said the exact cause of Deuntay's death is unknown, but autopsy results indicated he suffered from malnutrition and had several broken bones, healed and unhealed.

Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Jerry Dorsey, who heads the child and family abuse unit, said Deuntay had been dead for a period ranging from 9 months to a year.

Additionally, Worthy charged Reid's mother, Doretha Lippett, 51, of Detroit with two counts of welfare fraud for her role in allegedly assisting her daughter in collecting the money.

"It is very difficult to think of an innocent child suffering so profoundly

during his two years on Earth," Worthy said.

All three suspects are expected to be arraigned today in 36th District Court.

Detroit Free Press

Wayne County news briefs

MARCH 19, 2008

DETROIT: Welfare fraud charges possible

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy is expected to announce charges today in a case where the burned remains of a 2-year-old boy were found in a basement ceiling in Detroit.

Detroit police and state officials are investigating possible welfare fraud charges against the boy's parents, Nickella Reid, 24, and Joseph Miller, 27, both of Detroit.

Deuntay Miller died nearly two years ago in his parents' care. Reid and Miller told police that they tried to cremate Deuntay in a barbecue grill to avoid funeral costs.

Police said Reid collected welfare and food stamps in the names of Deuntay and four other children, all 5 or younger, after the boy died. Police said she received more than \$700 in monthly food stamps.

The remains were discovered in November as Detroit police investigated burn injuries to a 1-year-old boy, who police said is Deuntay's brother.



Judge puts Coleman back in jail

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

By Steven Hepker

shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

A Lake Columbia man accused of raping and beating his baby daughter was jailed Tuesday and will remain there until his trial.

Circuit Judge John McBain said the \$100,000 bond set for Kirk Coleman in District Court did not adequately reflect the seriousness of the alleged crime.

“If the defendant was responsible, this was one of the most horrendous crimes this court has seen,” McBain said.

Assistant Prosecutor Allison Bates sought the bond review, to the surprise of defense attorney Dennis Hurst.

“He has behaved himself impeccably,” Hurst said, noting that the former Army paratrooper has a large family at Lake Columbia. His family posted bond last fall.

Blackman Township investigators and prosecutors allege Coleman, 27, repeatedly assaulted his 3-month-old daughter, causing bleeding on her brain and 17 bone fractures. They also allege the girl was raped.

He was bound over to Circuit Court last month after a two-day preliminary hearing. A trial date has not been set.

Hurst recently sought DNA testing on some evidence, which could delay the trial because of a backlog at the Michigan State Police crime lab.

The attorneys will meet again with McBain on April 1 for a status report.

Hurst indicated Tuesday the defense will try to implicate others, particularly the mother, Ashley Rogers.

“There is very little evidence he did it,” Hurst said. “Other people at the home were equally capable of doing such things.”

The couple lived in a Blackman Township apartment complex. Their daughter was born in June, and they were married two weeks later. They took the baby to Foote Hospital in September.

The girl had suffered brain damage and was placed on a ventilator at the University of Michigan Hospital.

She continues to recover and is in custody of her maternal grandmother.

Rogers recently was granted limited visitation rights.

©2008 Jackson Citizen Patriot

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Police Investigate Daycare Baby Death

March 18, 2008 - 10:21PM

COLDWATER TWP. (Newschannel 3) - Michigan State Police are investigating the death of a 5-month-old baby in Branch County.

The baby was pronounced dead Tuesday around 3:30 p.m. at Coldwater Community Health Center, after being cared for at the home of a daycare provider.

An autopsy has been scheduled for Wednesday in Grand Rapids, and more information will be released after the results of that autopsy come back.

MSP troopers were assisted at the scene by Life Care Ambulance, the Coldwater Fire Department, and the Department of Human Services.

Newschannel 3 will bring you more information in this case as it becomes available.



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published March 19, 2008



(Photo by Matthew Dae Smith|For the Lansing State Journal)

Mary Wood, the wife of convicted child molester Robin Wood, talks to the media on Wednesday morning outside Judge Paula Manderfield's courtroom. Moments before, Robin Wood was sentenced to 10-30 years in prison. Many friends and family held up signs that read "Free Robin Wood" after the sentencing. "We will appeal this," Mary said.

Related content from LSJ:

- [VIDEO: Supporters say man convicted of sexual assault is innocent](#)

Wood sentenced up to 30 years for child sex abuse

Midday update

Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

A man convicted of sexually assaulting two young girls at his wife's home day care was sentenced today to between 10 and 30 years in prison.

At a sentencing hearing before Ingham County Circuit Court Judge Paula Manderfield, Robin Wood, 60, stood stone-faced as relatives of the victims read letters asking the judge for the maximum sentence and as the sentence was handed down.

The mother of the 5-year-old victim was visibly elated after hearing the sentence. "We're just really pleased it's over," she said outside the courtroom. Her name is not being released in order not to identify the victim.

In January, a jury found Wood guilty of four counts of criminal sexual conduct involving the girls, now 5 and 11 years old. Two of the counts were first-degree criminal sexual conduct, which carried a maximum punishment of life in prison.

An aunt of one of the two girls read a letter in court saying, "He's a sick and disgusting man who

took the trust and innocence of young children."

The woman had to stop read occasionally in order to compose herself.

"I still maintain the fact that I am innocent of this crime," Wood said in a courtroom packed with more than 40 supporters and about two dozen victim family members. Other supporters had to stand out in the hall.

Wood's family members said afterward that he intends to appeal the conviction.

Dozens of Wood's supporters packed the hall outside the courtroom after the hearing. Many held signs that said "Free Robin Wood" and chanted that phrase.

Several former attendees of the day care were among Wood's supporters.

"He was everything -- a father figure, a grandpa to me," said 18-year-old Alyssa Hernandez of Lansing who began attending the day care when she was 4 years old. Hernandez then broke down in tears.

Twenty-five-year-old Max Speckin of Lansing, who attended the day care from age 3 to 13, said: "There's no way he is capable of doing anything of that magnitude to children."

Mary Wood said her husband is innocent.

"So much was wrong with (the prosecution's) case," she said, "and it will all come out in the appeal."

Police closed Mary's Quality Daycare on Jan. 19, 2007. A parent had told the state Department of Human Services about possible crimes.

Mary Wood lost her license. Her husband was charged in February.

He testified during the trial that he occasionally touched children attending or visiting his wife's home day care business.

He'd hug them, rub their backs, put an arm around them or apply cream to rashes.

However, he denied ever touching them for sexual reasons.

Check www.lsj.com for updates.

Copyright 2008 Lansing State Journal Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service (updated August 2006)

[\[Back\]](#)

Niles Daily Star

ONLINE EDITION

[Leader Publications](#)
[Classifieds](#)
[Archives](#)
[Features](#)
[Online Forms](#)
[General Info](#)
[Reader Forum](#)


60 sec interview



Andy Crawley
weather

daily star menu

- **daily star home**
- **news**
- **sports**
- **columnists**
- **editorials**
- **obituaries**
- **Weddings and Engagements**
- **Letters to the Editor**
- **Community News**
- **Food**

poll

Are you involved in a March Madness pool?

☐ Yes

☐ No

[View Results](#)

News

Tip leads to meth

Tuesday, March 18, 2008 10:33 AM EDT

CASSOPOLIS - A search Thursday led to the arrest of two in Howard Township.

Cass County Sheriff Joseph M. Underwood Jr. reports that the Cass County Drug Enforcement Team executed a search warrant in the 62000 block of Anderson Road at approximately 4:15 p.m.

The Cass County Drug Enforcement Team acted on information of a possible methamphetamine laboratory and distribution of the product from the Howard Township residence.

Upon execution of the search warrant, detectives located a disassembled methamphetamine lab, meth product and paraphernalia, as well as firearms in the home.

Both occupants were arrested and charged with operating a meth lab, possession of meth, maintaining a drug house, felony firearm and child abuse, as the home was also occupied by five children ranging in age from 16 years down to 9 years.

The 31-year-old male and the 34-year-old female were transported to the Cass County Jail, where they were lodged.

Assisting the Cass County Drug Enforcement Team with the investigation was the Pokagon Band of Tribal Police, the Cass County Sheriff's Office Road Division, the Cass County Department of Human Services and Cass County Animal Control.



Chicago Title

This incident remains under investigation.

Anyone with information pertaining to this or any other crime may call the Cass County Drug Team at (269) 782-5206 or the anonymous tip line at 1-800-462-9328.

[Print this story](#) | [Email this story](#)



Alleged meth lab busted

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

BARRY COUNTY -- Two children were removed from an alleged methamphetamine lab after a state police drug team raided a Baltimore Township residence Tuesday, authorities said. Officers with the Southwest Enforcement Team conducted a search warrant at the home and reportedly found evidence that the lab was operating for months in the presence of the children. A husband and wife, who were not identified, face several felony charges. Police said they also found marijuana and prescription medication.

©2008 Grand Rapids Press

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

This is a printer friendly version of an article from **battlecreekenquirer.com**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Mar 19, 2008

EDITORIAL

New WMU scholarship fills important need

Nearly 20,000 children in Michigan - and an estimated half-million nationwide - are in the foster care system. While some of them eventually are reunited with their biological families or adopted, most remain in the system until age 18, when they are left largely on their own to forge their futures.

Entering adulthood is a challenging proposition for anyone, but it is all the scarier for those young people who have no type of family support system.

Teens who age out of foster care face a higher risk of joblessness, homelessness, substance abuse and other problems. Government and social service agencies are recognizing the need to help them become successfully independent. The Michigan Department of Human Services has established a Web site at www.michigan.gov/fyit where information and many resources are available. Locally, Wanda Miller started A Home for Me, a program to help teach teenagers in foster care the life skills they will need to be self-supporting.

While education often is the key to building a fulfilling life, many young people who age out of foster care are overwhelmed by the prospect of attending college.

Now Western Michigan University has established the Seita Scholars Program specifically for foster care alumni who want to obtain a higher education.

The program is named after John Seita, who aged out of the foster care system in the early 1970s and went on to earn three college degrees and become an author and university professor. Seita served as a program director for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation from 1996-2001.

Seita Scholars not only will receive full tuition to WMU, they also will have guaranteed year-round housing and additional services.

Other colleges have established scholarships for foster care alumni, but few have developed comprehensive programs such as WMU's that will provide a network of support and assistance to help ensure success in college. While such services cannot replace the nurturing of a family, they can help provide scholarship recipients with a sense of security and knowledge that they are not alone in their efforts to earn a college degree and build a life for themselves.

In creating the Seita Scholars Program, WMU is helping to ensure that young people who have faced many disadvantages in their lives are given the opportunity to become successful, productive adults.



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published March 19, 2008

More info

- Parents whose children attended the home day care at 911 Hickory St. may contact Detective Teresa Eisfelder at 483-4484.

Background checks at day cares limited to adults, state says

Youth accused in sex assaults held at county center

Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

The state's day care licensing process is limited in the ways it can help protect children in a home day care from minors who live there, state officials said.

That contrasts with processes for licensees and other adults who live in a home used for day care, who go through rigorous background checks.

A youth, whose home at 911 Hickory St. was also a day care, was charged last week as a juvenile with first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

He is charged with sexually assaulting one child and accused of sexually assaulting another, both at the day care.

The two children were 5 years old and 2 years old, police said this week.

The youth is being held at the Ingham County Youth Center.

Lansing police Lt. Noel Garcia said the suspect on Feb. 20 was reported to have "had the children do something inappropriate and rewarded them with candy."

He would not comment further.

The Michigan Department of Human Services closed the day care, which was run by Michelle Roper, on March 6 and notified her that it intends to revoke her license, state records show.

The licensee of a home day care and any adults living in the home go through rigorous background checks, said Don Vita of the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing.

But the agency's hands are tied when it comes to investigating the backgrounds of juveniles, because that kind of information is kept confidential by law enforcement and the court system, he said.

Officials have not released information about whether the juvenile at the home had a prior record.

Licensees are required to ensure that everyone in a home is "of good moral character," Vita said, citing state requirements.

Roper received her license on Oct. 31, 2007, DHS records show. The license allowed her to provide 24-hour child care, seven days a week, for children up to 17 years old.

Lansing police are continuing an internal investigation into an apparent delay in police reacting to initial reports of abuse at the day care.

Parents of one of the children reported the incident to Lansing police on Feb. 26, and a delay in when detectives began looking into the complaint is being looked at internally, Garcia said.

"It sat for a couple of days without any action, and that's unacceptable to us," Garcia said. "To prevent it from happening in the future, we will look at whether there needs to be policy changes or if we need to find a better way of referring these out."

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

Copyright 2008 Lansing State Journal Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service (updated August 2006)

[\[Back\]](#)

[Print This Story](#)

The Daily Telegram

[Print Page](#)

WEDNESDAY MARCH 19, 2008 Last modified: *Tuesday, March 18, 2008 10:27 AM EDT*

Teen ruled competent for trial in poisoning

A preliminary hearing will be held to determine if there is sufficient evidence to try a 15-year-old for the death of her grandmother.

By [Dennis Pelham](#)

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN — A teenage girl accused of poisoning her grandmother by mixing up prescription drugs was ruled competent to stand trial at a brief hearing Monday in Lenawee County District Court.

Kristina Lynn Adkins, 15, made no statements during her appearance before Judge James E. Sheridan. He reviewed a report from a state psychologist who evaluated Adkins earlier this year before making the ruling that clears the way for a preliminary examination. The hearing is to determine if there is sufficient evidence to try Adkins for the Aug. 1, 2006, death of Virginia Bentley. The hearing currently set for April 15 could be adjourned as late as June 18 to allow defense attorneys time to prepare.

The 53-year-old woman died at her Rollin Township home. The death was later ruled to have been caused by an allergic reaction to morphine sulfate, a prescription drug used by her husband, Ireland "Buzz" Bentley Jr.

An investigation by detectives from the Lenawee County Sheriff's Department resulted in murder, poisoning and attempted murder charges being brought against Adkins in December. The girl allegedly knew her grandmother was highly allergic to morphine sulfate. She is accused of taking that drug from her grandfather's medication and mixing it in medications Virginia Bentley was taking. She allegedly made three attempts to kill her grandmother with the drug in July 2006 before she died from a fourth dose on Aug. 1.

Adkins was living with her grandparents at the time. No motive has been suggested by sheriff's department officials or prosecutors.

Reports from the state psychologist who evaluated Adkins included an opinion that she was criminally responsible for her actions at the time of the murder. Court-appointed defense attorney Michael McFarland of Adrian said that issue is not settled yet.

"We anticipate petitioning the court for an independent psychological examination," McFarland said.

He and co-counsel Anna Marie Anzalone of Adrian must first go through a lengthy written report of the sheriff's department investigation. The inch-thick report was only turned over to them Monday. The sheriff's department also has up to six hours of tape-recorded interviews with Adkins that have not yet been transcribed or heard by defense attorneys. Lenawee County Family Court Judge Margaret M.S. Noe is being asked by the defense attorneys to order the recorded interviews be transcribed.

"We'll be deciding what strategy to pursue after we go through the reports and transcripts," McFarland said.

One option being considered is a battered child syndrome defense, he said.

After the hearing, Adkins was returned to the Maurice Spear Campus, where she has been held without bond since December. It was her first court appearance since Jan. 3, when she was brought to a hastily arranged start of a preliminary examination as a 14-day deadline for the hearing was about to expire.

The case was moved to district court for a preliminary examination after the Lenawee County prosecutor's office decided to have her tried under adult court procedures while remaining under juvenile court jurisdiction where a trial is to be conducted.

"Buzz" Bentley said in December he urged prosecutors to try Adkins as an adult to guarantee all proceedings would be public. If convicted, the court would then decide whether to sentence her as an adult or as a juvenile.

-- CLOSE WINDOW--



Muskegon Chronicle

Sentence reduced for man who stabbed wife

, /1, 20/08

By John S. Hausman

jhausman@muskegonchronicle.com

MUSKEGON COUNTY -- A Michigan Supreme Court ruling has taken 21½ years off the minimum prison sentence of an Egelston Township man who stabbed his wife 11 times with a steak knife in June 2005, nearly killing her.

Originally, in January 2006, Muskegon County Circuit Judge Timothy G. Hicks ordered William Lee Lathrop to prison for 20 to 35 years after a jury convicted him of assault with intent to murder his wife, Amy Lee Lathrop.

On Friday -- after the state's high court overturned that sentence and remanded the case to Hicks -- the judge resentedenced Lathrop to a minimum term of 17½ years, with the maximum remaining at 35 years. The revised sentence makes Lathrop's earliest possible parole date Dec. 27, 2022, rather than June 27, 2025. Lathrop is lodged at Gus Harrison Correctional Facility in Adrian.

The supreme court on Jan. 25 overruled the original minimum sentence because the state sentencing guidelines had been scored incorrectly before the original sentencing.

At the time of sentencing, Hicks believed the guidelines called for a minimum term of at most 17½ years. Instead, it became clear during the appeals process, those guidelines actually should have topped out at 15 years.

In his January 2006 sentencing, Hicks departed upward from the guidelines by 21½ years, largely because Lathrop had repeatedly called his wife and children from jail to try to persuade them to help him win a deal under which he would plead guilty to a lesser charge. Hicks had said his sentencing was influenced by that "manipulation," by the effect of the stabbing on the couple's children, who witnessed it, and that at one point Lathrop moved the knife around in his wife's abdomen, like "a hunter might do when he means to kill his prey," the judge said in 2006.

The new sentence still departs upward from the top of the guidelines by 21½ years -- but now the upward departure is from the lower base of 15 years.

©2008 Muskegon Chronicle

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Days before her death, Julia Dawson told of abuse

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

By John Agar

The Grand Rapids Press

ROCKFORD -- Three days before her 2004 killing, Julia Dawson decided to leave her abusive husband, a "raving lunatic" who tried to control her every move and left her with bruises and red marks around her neck.

She told her mother: "Get my room ready, because I'm coming home."

The allegations are contained in court papers recently filed by the prosecution, which wants to submit the victim's statements -- told to family and co-workers at Kalfact Plastics -- in the case against her husband, Timothy Dawson.

The prosecution says the hearsay statements, along with Dawson's conviction for domestic assault on a previous wife, should be allowed at his probable-cause hearing next week. Rockford District Judge Steven Servaas is expected to rule Thursday.

Dawson, 31, is charged with first-degree murder in his wife's Jan. 11, 2004, killing. Her body turned up 22 days later north of their Sparta home. Kent County sheriff's detectives believe he strangled her with a belt, then dumped her body near a guardrail on Pierson Road.

Six months after the slaying, Dawson and their young son left for Kerr County, Texas, where he started a new life with another woman, Billie Jane Dean. Sheriff's detectives, who built a largely circumstantial case, arrested Dawson in Texas earlier this year.

Police said Dawson, who denies the allegations, lied throughout the investigation. Police have tied Dawson's cell phone records to towers near where his wife's body was dumped, despite his contention that he never drove in that area while searching for his missing wife.

Police believe Dawson killed his wife because she planned to leave him.

The victim's alleged statements portrayed Dawson as an abusive, controlling husband.

"In the months preceding Ms. Dawson's homicide, she stated multiple times to (her mother, Tamara) Keenan her desire to leave the defendant and seek a divorce," wrote William Rollstin, an assistant state attorney general.

"Mrs. Keenan told Ms. Dawson she could live with her if she chose to leave the defendant. Three days before Ms. Dawson's death, she told Mrs. Keenan, 'Get my room ready because I'm coming home.'"

Julia Dawson felt "empowered by her decision to stand up to the defendant and was confident in her decision to leave him," Rollstin wrote.

Her co-workers recalled her allegations of abuse. Supervisor Lisa Wright said Julia Dawson showed red marks and on her neck, and told her, "I want you to remember this."

Wright told investigators Julia Dawson's husband would call her immediately upon her arrival at work to verify she was there, records showed.

Co-worker Jessica Bush said Julia Dawson referred to her husband as a "raving lunatic."

Bush witnessed bruises on the victim's ribs, arm, calf and neck allegedly caused by her husband. Julia Dawson told Bush her husband once told her: "If he could not have her, nobody could," records showed.

Julia Dawson also told a co-worker she "didn't really have a marriage."

The prosecution believes the statements should be admitted as exceptions to the hearsay rule.

The statements "show both Ms. Dawson's and the defendant's then-existing state of mind and (her) future intent ... to leave the defendant and move out as a result of his controlling demeanor and violent disposition."

Send e-mail to the author: jagar@grpress.com

©2008 Grand Rapids Press

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Local News

> [News](#) > [Local News](#)

[Print this Page](#)

[«--back to story](#)

Man to undergo psych exam in stalking case

Phil Wenzel

POSTED: March 18, 2008

A man accused of stalking three Alpena Community College instructors has been ordered to undergo a psychiatric evaluation in order to determine if he is competent enough to stand trial.

Twenty-sixth Circuit Court Judge John Kowalski ordered 54-year-old Cameron Conklin to be sent to the Center for Forensic Psychiatric in Lansing to be examined. He currently is in custody after being arrested earlier this month for violating a personal protection order that barred him from contacting the instructors, all female.

Kowalski gave the order during a hearing Tuesday afternoon. Conklin did not attend the hearing but was represented by attorney Mike Lamble, who asked for the evaluation. The college's attorney, Karen Bennett, did not object.

"We want to see him have a psychiatric evaluation so that he may obtain whatever treatment is necessary," she said.

Lamble was unavailable for comment Tuesday afternoon.

Still, Conklin's actions have posed a concern to the instructors and to ACC administrators. President Olin Joynton said Conklin was a student at the college last fall. He gave the three instructors Christmas gifts that were "a little off-beat," Joynton said.

Conklin then wrote letters to the instructors which disturbed them, Joynton said. An ACC dean asked Conklin to refrain from contacting them but he persisted and was suspended from the college.

He continued to contact them, so ACC asked Kowalski for the PPO, Joynton said. That "seemed to work fine through the month of February," he said. But in early March Conklin left a phone message on the home phone of one of the instructors. That is when he was arrested.

Although the instructors are very concerned, Conklin has made no serious physical threats against them, Joynton said.

"There have been no threats against the lives of the instructors or the other people on campus," Joynton said.

Conklin is facing two charges. The first is for aggravated stalking, a felony, and is currently in district court. The second, in circuit court, is for violating the PPO.

Conklin was facing a \$10,000 bond in the first case, which was canceled. That means he cannot be bonded out on that charge. A \$10,000 bond was established in the second case.

The two moves mean Conklin likely will remain in custody until at least the end of his evaluation, Bennet said.

Tuesday's hearing dealt exclusively with the PPO violation. He is scheduled to appear in district court Thursday on the stalking charge, although Alpena County Chief Assistant Prosecutor Judi Twarozynski said that is likely to follow the same path as today's hearing.

"We won't get a court date until we get a report back" on Conklin's mental condition, she said. That could take about a month, she added.

Phil Wenzel can be reached via e-mail at pwenzel@thealpenanews.com or by phone at 358-5689.

[Subscribe to The Alpena News](#)

PETOSKEY News-Review

Online Publication, Copyright © 2007, Petoskey News-Review · 319 State St., Petoskey, MI 49770 · (231) 347-2544 · Fax: (231) 347-6833

Bi-monthly food stamps won't stretch food budget

Monday, March 17, 2008 10:05 AM EDT

Legislation has just passed the state Senate which ought to be thoughtfully considered and vetted, as it could help hungry Michigan families and troubled businesses at the same time.

But we do have questions about a plan to change when food stamp recipients can get their "coupons."

According to the Associated Press, Michigan could become the first state in the nation to issue food stamps twice a month, making fresh produce and meat more available and giving grocery workers steadier hours.

The state's 1.2 million food stamp recipients — the highest number ever — now have their benefits added to a debit card within the first 10 days of the month. They then spend those dollars early in the month, typically in poorer, urban areas where residents may have limited transportation, AP reports.

Each recipient gets an average \$88 a month.

That is not very much money, and won't buy a stalk of celery.

Two percent, or more than one in nine, Michigan residents get food stamps. Eighty percent of benefits go to households with children. The number of food stamp recipients in Michigan has doubled in six years.

Legislation that would require the state to issue food stamp benefits two times a month was approved by the state Senate.

This legislation seems designed mostly to help businesses which get slammed in the first 10 days of the month but get much fewer shoppers for the remaining 20 days. It also benefits unions, whose members are almost laid off for the majority of a month because food stamp recipients all hit the stores at the same time.

It could have the added benefit, though, of allowing more fresh-food purchasing, advocates for the poor say.

We think food stamp recipients can judge for themselves when to "spend" their food stamps. If we are giving them a "hand up" and a not a "hand out," doesn't it makes sense to enable them to budget those purchases and what they buy — in terms of produce and meat — on their own?

Is it patronizing to say they can't manage it, so we have to split up how they are given assistance?

Moreover, we wonder if the real problem is not in when stamps (it's actually electronic now) are issued for use, but how little the stamps can buy. The federal food stamp program assumes families have enough cash of their own plus food stamps to spend \$1.05 per person per meal.

The food stamp bills are House Bill 4923 and Senate Bill 120. The House is expected to take up the measure as well.

Related Links:

[Click to print this page.](#)



Muskegon Chronicle

Shelter needs for homeless remains high

, /1, 20/08

By Susan Harrison Wolffis

susanharrison@muskegonchronicle.com

When Lonnie Gordon, a homeless man from Muskegon with a history of alcoholism died of hypothermia in a February snowstorm, questions -- why? how? what went wrong? -- resounded throughout the community-at-large.

Nowhere were the questions more pointed than those asked by members of the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network, a local consortium of agencies and programs determined to eliminate homelessness by 2016.

"We don't want to point fingers or make anyone take the blame (for Gordon's death). We just want to know why," said Judith Kell, who chairs the Continuum of Care Network. "What went wrong? How'd he fall through the cracks?"

At their regular monthly meeting in March, Muskegon County Continuum of Care Network members voted to establish a "sentinel events" committee to study how to meet the needs of the homeless "better than we have," Kell said.

"Clearly we need to figure out how to prevent something like this from ever happening again," Kell said.

Gordon, 48, had stayed at the Rescue Mission's men's shelter to escape the bitter cold for several days and nights before being asked to leave because he had been drinking on the premises, said Carla Skoglund, the mission's executive director.

No one is allowed to have or consume alcohol or drugs, smoke or engage in violent behavior at either the men's or the women's shelters, she said. They also are required to go to chapel services once a day.

"We don't turn anyone away, and that is so important, especially in bad weather when so many (homeless people) have nowhere else to turn," Skoglund said. "We exist to demonstrate and proclaim God's love to the less fortunate and homeless people of West Michigan, but there are certain rules people in the shelters have to follow for everyone's safety. We don't allow chaos. We can't allow chaos."

The mission regularly houses 62 at its women's and children's shelter at 1692 Peck and 44 at its men's shelter at 400 W. Laketon. In the dead of winter, the number swelled to as many as 62 men seeking shelter from the bitter cold for nights on end, Skoglund said. Cots were set up in a spare room to accommodate the overflow.

"In some missions, they just put mats on the floor. That's the harsh reality, but we think they deserve better," she said.

The Rescue Mission provided 25,919 nights of lodging in 2007 to those who were homeless and in need -- far more than any other shelter in the area. The men's shelter is the only one in the area set up to accommodate short-term stays.

"The wounds of the people who come to us are deep," Skoglund said. "By the time they are here, they are pretty beat up (emotionally). It doesn't matter if they brought it on themselves, they are suffering. Our goal is to make sure they are better off when they leave than when they came to us."

No one who serves the homeless anticipates fewer people seeking shelter as the weather becomes more springlike and temperate.

"If anything, the issue is becoming more severe," said Christina Scarpino, the director of development and spokeswoman for Every Woman's Place and Webster House Youth Services, 1221 W. Laketon.

Every available bed is filled at the Muskegon Rescue Mission, the Muskegon County Veterans' Center Transitional Housing Center, Every Woman's Place women's shelter and Webster House shelter for teenagers, as well as special housing programs operated by West Michigan Therapy Inc. and Community Mental Health of Muskegon County

Michigan's dismal economy -- even more than this winter's disastrous weather -- is keeping local shelters for the homeless filled to capacity.

"The situation today is very, very different than anything we've ever seen in the community," Kell said.

An increasing number of foreclosures on homes, the high price of gasoline and out-of-sight utility bills has played havoc on families throughout the community, Scarpino said.

"Never before" have so many teen parents sought shelter with their children at Webster House, Scarpino said.

"Many of our kids who come to us have nowhere else to go," she said. "Their parents are struggling to pay their bills. They can't support their teens and aren't prepared to raise their grandchildren."

Many of the young people, as well as women who flee domestic violence to the safety of Every Woman's Place, stay as long as six months "and beyond," Scarpino said. "It's just the right thing to do."

The Veterans Service Center has six one-bedroom apartments in its transitional living housing at 165 E. Apple. Homeless veterans and their families have priority, said David Eling, director of Muskegon County Department of Veteran Affairs. However, if there is an opening, non-veterans and their families can live there. The maximum stay is three months.

"We always stay full, always have a waiting list," Eling said.

The need for housing is "far greater" than the number of places available, he said.

"We know that many, many, many people who are technically homeless are living with other family members or living on the streets, in their cars, in abandoned houses," Eling said.

Summer weather doesn't lessen the number or the need, said Stacey Vandenberg, deputy director of West Michigan Therapy/Transitional Living Center in Muskegon.

"The trend has been that more persons are requesting services in the warmer months," Vandenberg said. "They've worn out their 'couch surfing' requests with family and friends, and they have nowhere else to turn. They're homeless, and where are they going to go?"

©2008 Muskegon Chronicle

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Charities' residency rule halted Detroit council gives nonprofits a 1-year reprieve

BY ZACHARY GORCHOW AND CECIL ANGEL • FREE PRESS STAFF
WRITERS • MARCH 19, 2008

The Detroit City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to give area charities a short reprieve from a requirement that 51% of their board memberships be made up of Detroit residents in order to qualify for federal grants distributed by the city.

The resolution waives the requirement only for this year. The council is expected to revisit the matter before next year's allocation process.

Some council members said they still feel Detroiters should have a bigger say in how the charities spend federal funds.

Councilwoman Barbara-Rose Collins, among those who defended the requirement, said the charities should be given more time to adjust to it.

Councilwoman Alberta Tinsley-Talabi said the requirement was a classic case of creating unintended consequences.

"I'm very concerned that long-standing institutions were weeded out as a result of this misguided policy," she said.

The 105 nonprofits have been up in arms since last week, when the council informed them that they were ineligible for funding from the Community Development Block Grant and Neighborhood Opportunity Fund programs because the volunteers who make up the majority of their boards live outside the city.

Focus: HOPE, the Salvation Army, Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries and the Boys and Girls Club were some of the affected organizations -- groups that provide most or all of their services to Detroit residents.

"We blew it, but now we have an opportunity to fix it," said council President Ken Cockrel Jr.

Tim Duperron, interim chief executive officer of Focus: HOPE, which stood to lose \$205,000 in block grants, said he remarked last week when the rejections were announced that "rational minds would prevail. And thankfully, that's exactly what happened."

An appeals meeting scheduled for today that would have allowed nonprofits to contest their ineligibility was canceled.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which oversees distribution of the federal funds to local governments, told the city that it will need to hold an abbreviated reapplication process for those groups deemed ineligible and anyone who did not apply.

Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's administration also would have to sign off on the residency change. Kerwin Wimberly, the mayor's liaison to the council, said the administration is willing to work with the council on the issue.

City Planner Marcel Todd told the council later that representatives of the Planning Commission, which oversees the city's block grant program, and HUD officials will meet today to work out details.

Todd said 319 nonprofits applied for grant money. City Planner Christopher Gulock told the council that grant money has decreased steadily, falling from \$59 million in 2002 to \$42.8 million this year.

Greg Bowens, a spokesman for Mariners Inn, a homeless shelter and substance abuse treatment center for men in Detroit, said he is happy to have the reprieve, at least for now.

The new residency rule would have cost the shelter \$158,000 in federal funds.

"The council's original decision put us in a real quandary as to how we were going to service the men who are so desperately in need of funds," Bowens said. "We appreciate the new action taken by the council. It gives the people here a second opportunity to continue to do the good work that they normally do."

Contact **ZACHARY GORCHOW** at 313-222-6678 or zgorchow@freepress.com. Staff writer Joe Rossiter contributed to this report.

PRESS & GUIDE

Ismael Ahmed, Russell Ebeid & John Dingell to be honored at ACCESS 37th Anniversary Dinner

DEARBORN - On May 10, a diverse group of leaders, dignitaries, and community members will gather to celebrate the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) 37th Anniversary to celebrate 37 years of service to the community and honor this year's award recipients.

Director of the Michigan Department of Human Services and former ACCESS Executive Director, Ismael Ahmed, will receive the prestigious Arab American of the Year Award.

This award is presented annually to individuals or organizations for their commitment and contribution to the development of their community on a local and national level.

Ahmed will be recognized for his lifelong contributions to the economic, social and cultural health of the Arab American community.

The unique role Ahmed has played in enabling the long-term sustainability of not only ACCESS, but Arab American and community organizations throughout the country, is unparalleled, said a spokesperson for ACCESS.

Russell Ebeid, director of Guardian Industries Corp., will receive ACCESS' very first "Making an Impact" award, established to recognize individuals who have made a positive impact by raising awareness of issues affecting their community.

Ebeid will be honored for his philanthropic contributions that serve as an example and role model for Arab Americans everywhere.

Ebeid's efforts are motivated by two passions: a desire to make a difference in educational opportunities for underserved youth, mostly from immigrant families, and a desire to stay close to his Lebanese heritage. His hope is to inspire other Arab Americans to stand up, be proud of their identity and give generously where they can, the ACCESS spokesperson said.

Congressman John D. Dingell will be honored with a special tribute recognizing and highlighting his commitment and contributions to the development of the Arab American community and the community at-large.

Dingell has shown national leadership, representing and supporting issues that are deeply important to Arab Americans throughout the country and in particular, the Michigan community.

As the longest ever "dean" of the U.S. House of Representatives, Dingell's immense courage and integrity have shown through his years of service, the spokesperson said.

This year's dinner will take place at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance, with doors opening at 5:30 p.m. and the program beginning at 6 p.m. Sponsored by Ford Motor Co. and Comerica, the dinner is the second-largest dinner in Michigan and the largest Arab-American event in the country, with more than 2,500 people in attendance.

ACCESS is a human services organization committed to the development of the Arab American community in all aspects of economic and cultural life, helping low-income families, as well as newly-arrived immigrants, adapt to life in America.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.pressandguide.com/stories/031908/loc_20080319010.shtml